AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

Please cancel claims 15 and 19 and amend claim 13 as follows:

13.   (Currently Amended) A document management system comprising:

(a) a document data storage system;

(b) a plurality of attest data storage systems; and

(c) a plurality of computer systems, each operating as a terminal, the document data storage system, the plurality of attest data storage systems and the plurality of computer system being coupled together on a network securely coupled to outside the network,

the document data storage system having an ID number associated therewith, the document data storage system storing and managing an electronic document and, for any stored electronic document, storing a document number associated with the document, and attest data, the attest data comprising signature image data, a signer ID number, an ID number of the attest data storage system associated with the document, and a serial usage number relating to the document,

wherein, when a person utilizing one of the computer terminals, and authorized to access the document data storage system and the electronic document, requests a display or printing of image data of the document, the document data storage system displays or prints data of a total image of the requested electronic document, the total image comprising the electronic document, a document name, the document number, the ID number of the document data storage system, as well as attached bar codes representing said document and ID numbers, one or more signature images, the signer ID number including the ID number of the attest storage system, the serial usage number of the signature image data, and attached bar codes representing said numbers in the vicinity of the original signature image,

wherein, for a document to be signed by plural signers, the attest data and electronic document are registered in accordance with the following procedure:

(a) a first one of the plurality of the computer systems securely provides a first signer with his/her signer ID number, which includes the ID number of the attest data storage system, and allowing the first signer to register an image data of his/her own signature or seal in the attest data storage system as a signature image data representing his/her approval, the signature image data being registered in the attest data storage system, with the signer ID number, and the signature usage number,

(b) the first computer system accesses the document data storage system securely and requests delivery of a document number for the new electronic document,

(c) the document data storage system supplies the requested document number and stores the document and a set of planned signer ID numbers temporarily,

(d) the document data storage system delivers the electronic document, having attached thereto the ID number of the document storage system, the document number, all planned signer ID numbers, to the attest data storage systems associated with the attached signer ID number and requests the signature image data,

(e) upon receipt of the request of attest data from the document data storage system, each of the attest data storage systems, after confirming the signer's approval for the document supplied from the document data storage system, creates the serial usage number of the signature image data, and stores the ID number of the document storage system and the document number in connection with the serial usage number of the signature image data and the signer ID number which includes the attest data storage system ID number, and then

delivers the signature image data, the signer ID number and the serial usage number of the signature image data to the document data storage system,

(f)   after receipt of all planned signers' signature image data, the document data storage system stores the electronic document data, as a completed document, and stores together with the plural signature image data, the signer ID numbers and the serial usage numbers of the signature image data in connection with the document data number, together with barcodes.

14.   (Previously Presented) The document management system according to claim 13, wherein:

the document data storage system, after obtaining the signer's approval, requests the attest data storage systems to deliver the attest data stored therein;

each attest data storage system securely stores and manages the attest data used for evidence of approval by an authorized individual person or corporation; and

a signer who is the owner of a signature or seal, can register with the attest data storage system beforehand securely his/her own signature image data as evidence of formal approval, such that it is impossible for others to register or change the registered attest data, the attest data of the signer comprising the signature image data, the signer ID number, the ID number of the attest data storage system and the serial usage number created when signer approves the document.

15.   (Canceled).

16.   (Previously Presented) The document management system according to claim 13, wherein the serial usage number includes the date information.

17.   (Previously Presented) The document management system according to claim 13, wherein:

the attest data storage system on which attest data for the document is stored:

(a)   records the approved document numbers, the ID number of the document storage system and the serial usage number, with reference to each signature image data; and

(b)   delivers the attest data together with the signer ID number to the document data storage system, upon receipt of a request over the network from the document data storage system, after having received, over the network, approval from the signer using the computer system.

18.   (Previously Presented) The document management system according to claim 17, wherein each of the computer systems has an electronic document creating function for creating a document body, a telecommunication function for securely transmitting/receiving the electronic documents, an authorizing function for authorizing an electronic document by transmitting signature data together with the document, and an output function for printing and displaying said total image data of the requested electronic document.

19.   (Canceled).

20.   (Previously Presented) The document management system as defined in claim 13, wherein a person securely accesses the document data storage system and the attest data storage system using one of the plurality of computer systems coupled together on the network, and inputs a barcode associated with a desired document number using a barcode reader to read and input data to the document management system, display and printing of the document being effected in response to: an input of the signer ID number and the serial

usage number using the barcode reader; and an input of that data to the attest data storage system.

21.   (Previously Presented) The document management system as defined in claim 13, wherein the document storage system ID number, the document number, the signer ID number, and signature usage number are expressed by bar codes, allowing verification of the document and signature by a bar code reader or scanner or digital camera connected to the computer system through the network, the computer system being operable to recognize automatically the barcode and access and verify the appropriate document storage system and attest data storage system.

22.   (Previously Presented) The document management system as defined in claim 13, wherein the person who registered the signature image data or seal image in the attest data storage system accesses to the system securely using one of the plurality of computer systems connecting the network using the signer ID number and a password so the system can display usage records of the signature image data, and the approved electronic document.